

SPRING 2013

Alumni Columns

Northwestern State University Magazine

Please admit Mrs Egan & her Luggage
Onboard, having paid
the Call

15 1820
Dinwiddie County Court January the 19th 1820
It appearing to the satisfaction of the Court that Bartho-
lomew Egan (a native of Ireland) intends to reside within this
Commonwealth and become a citizen thereof; On his motion
It is ordered that he be permitted to take the several oaths prescri-
bed by law for that purpose; Whereupon the said Egan took the
oath for giving assurances of fidelity to the Commonwealth of
Virginia and the oaths to support the Constitution of the United
States of America.

I do attest Nicholas C. C.



THE
Egan
COLLECTION



III Messages



Dr. Randall J. Webb,
1965, 1966
President
Northwestern State
University

Dear Alumni,

When I think back to the first time I visited the Northwestern State campus as a child, I remember marveling at the beauty of the campus. The rolling hills, stately buildings and rows of trees made a big impression on me. Today, the attractiveness of our campus makes prospective students want to be part of this special university.

As president I have worked to improve campus facilities while whenever possible preserving historic buildings that mean so much to Northwestern State students and alumni.

In a few weeks, we hope to finish the rehabilitation of Caspari Hall as part of an overall project to consolidate offices which serve students. Caspari Hall is being converted from a residence hall into a facility which will house offices for Northwestern State's president, the provost and vice president for academic and student affairs and other administrators. The project was paid for with state capital outlay funds.

There are other important projects taking place on the Natchitoches and Shreveport campuses that will enhance our facilities and save money at a time of tight budgets.

The College of Nursing and Allied Health Education Center in Shreveport is getting a 100-car parking lot which will be a great convenience for students. The university is also installing new carpeting in the building.

One project on the Natchitoches campus that you can't see is the installation of new steam lines. This project will make our buildings more comfortable and will produce significant savings.

Through private donations, we have been able to upgrade some of our athletic facilities. The Lady Demon Softball Diamond will get a new grandstand as Northwestern State hosts the 2013 Southland Conference Softball Tournament. Brown-Stroud Field was enhanced with a new infield. Under a warranty with the manufacturer, the university will soon resurface the track at the Walter Ledet Track Complex.

Each of these improvements is making your alma mater a better place for our students to receive the best possible education.



Dr. Chris Maggio,
1985, 1991
Assistant Vice
President of External
Affairs for University
Advancement

Dear Alumni,

As I write this, our staff is busy travelling around the region participating in recruiting receptions and alumni gatherings. Please check the back page of this magazine or click on the Events link at northwesternalumni.com to find dates and locations for Alumni After Hours, where you can visit with friends and representatives from Alumni Affairs, Athletics and other areas of the university. These occasions will help you stay connected to NSU and learn about some of the great things happening on campus.

As many of you know, former alumni director Brad Laird was lured by his love of coaching back to that career field and we wish him great success. Realignment at Northwestern State opened the door for me to return to work in Alumni Affairs and the NSU Foundation to oversee fund raising and alumni relations. Because external scholarship funding and recruiting have become so important to our success as a university, I will also continue to oversee University Recruiting as part of my new assignment as Assistant Vice President of External Affairs for University Advancement.

I am very excited about the opportunity to reconnect with NSU alumni and friends as well as continue to share with prospective students and their parents what a special place Northwestern State is. Thank you for your encouragement to me personally and for your continued support of Northwestern State University.

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FAX: 318-357-4225 • E-mail: maggio@nsula.edu

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Benefactor leaves \$200,000 trust to archives

Egan family's impact on north Louisiana history well-documented in family collection

Northwestern State University's Cammie G. Henry Research Center received a trust of \$200,000 from a benefactor whose collection of family documents has been managed by the NSU Archives for more than 40 years. The bequest from the estate of the late Edward Myers Egan is the largest single monetary donation to benefit Northwestern State's Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library.

Edward Myers Egan, who passed away in May 2012, was a descendant of Dr. Bartholomew Egan, a figure of historic interest in Louisiana. The Egan Collection includes letters and documents from Dr. Bartholomew Egan and other members of the Egan family that provide valuable information to researchers interested in the history of the Baptist denomination in Louisiana, Confederate medical history and daily life in 19th century rural north Louisiana.

According to NSU Archivist Mary Linn Wernet, the Egan Collection documents Dr. Bartholomew Egan's life from the time before he immigrated from Dublin, Ireland, to Virginia, where he received medical training, was a prominent educator and converted to the Baptist faith. After moving to Mount Lebanon, La., in 1847, he was instrumental in founding the Louisiana Baptist Convention and Mount Lebanon University, the first university in north Louisiana. Dr. Bartholomew Egan served as surgeon general and head of the state laboratory under the Confederate government of Louisiana.

"After Dr. Egan received a land grant to settle in Bienville Parish, he established Mount Lebanon as a Baptist college for men," Wernet said. "We have letters from Ireland and as he moved from there to Virginia and Louisiana. We have official and family letters from Mount Lebanon days and into the Civil War when he was surgeon general."

Dr. Bartholomew Egan's granddaughter, Miss Lavinia Egan, who was born during the Civil War and died during World War II, is credited with gathering and preserving many of the letters and documents that make up the collection, Wernet said.

"Lavinia moved to Shreveport and was an advocate for women's rights and a historian who maintained the collection," Wernet explained.



Dr. Bartholomew Egan

"The papers have been researched by historians not only interested in Bartholomew's life but also in Mount Lebanon as the first school of its kind in the area and because of the medical research that took place there. It was a place where they conducted pharmaceutical research and developed compounds to treat the wounded during the Civil War, so there are professors of pharmacy interested in information on the school's medical practices."

The Cammie G. Henry Research Center is housed on the third floor of NSU's Watson Library and contains Louisiana books, rare books, archival materials, NSU Archives, microfilm, maps, newspapers and oral history tapes. Most collections focus on Louisiana history with documents ranging in date from the founding of Natchitoches in 1714 to the present. The Egan Collection has already been utilized in

three thesis documents by graduate students.

The Egan family established a relationship with the Northwestern State Archives in the late 1960s when they became aware that the university maintained archived documents specifically related to Louisiana history. At that time, a portion of the Egan papers was entrusted to former archivist Katherine Bridges to be microfilmed. Edward Egan established a monetary trust for the archives in the 1970s and through the years provided financial support to the Cammie G. Henry Research Center by funding shelves and materials needed to preserve documents.

"The Egan family did not have a particular connection to Northwestern, but they felt it important that we are able to preserve not just their collection, but all the collections, letters, documents and maps for future scholars," said Abbie Landry, director of Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library. "As strong an archive as this is, this type of donation makes it even stronger."

Wernet plans to use the trust as a "perpetual fund for the archives as needed and as seed money for matching grants."

For more information on the Cammie G. Henry Research Center, visit library.nsula.edu/cammie-henry-research-center.

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Spotlights

Pineville High School Principal **Karl Carpenter** was selected to be inducted into the Louisiana Music Educators' Association Hall of Fame. The LMEA annually selects a single inductee. Ceremonies were held last fall as part of the LMEA All-State Choir Concert in Baton Rouge.

Carpenter began his journey in music education playing tube in the Alexandria Senior High School band under the direction of Jerry Payne, who later became band director at Northwestern State. Carpenter followed, marching the NSU band until his graduation.

Carpenter earned a bachelor's degree in music education in 1979 and a master's degree in music at Northwestern in 1987 before completing his doctorate at the University of Southern Mississippi in 2001. He began his career in 1979 as a band director, serv-

ing at Oberlin High School, Winnfield Senior High and Tioga High School before becoming assistant principal at Tioga. He later assumed leadership as principal at Carter C. Raymond Middle School and is currently principal at Pineville High School, where he has served since 2007.

Among the outstanding moments in his career are leading the Tioga High School band in playing "Hail To The Chief" for President Bill Clinton in 1996, the band's appearance that same year in the Washington, D.C. Independence Day parade and concerts performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and during a ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

Carpenter and his wife Terri have been married over 30 years and have three children, all who attended NSU.

In 2010, he was inducted into the NSU College of education and Human Development Hall of Distinguished Educators.

The Texas Foreign Language Association named **Jennifer Jarnagin** (2007) Latin Teacher of the Year last fall. Jarnagin teaches Latin to about 150 students at McKinney Boyd High School in McKinney, Texas. She has been teaching at Boyd since 2009.

Jarnagin, 29, became interested in Latin as a high school student in Louisiana. A professor at Louisiana Scholars' College at Northwestern State encouraged her to pursue classical studies, and she earned her master's in ancient Greek from Indiana University.

Michelle Craig (1999) was named one of the 2012 Most Powerful and Influential Women in Louisiana

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Egan continued from page 1



Northwestern State University administrators examine a few letters, photos and receipts from the Egan Collection housed in the Cammie G. Henry Research Center. The Center recently received a \$200,000 bequest from the estate of Edward Myers Egan, a descendant of Dr. Bartholomew Egan, a physician and educator who served as surgeon general of Louisiana during the Civil War. From left are Brad Laird, former director of University Advancement; Abbie Landry, director of NSU's Eugene P. Watson Memorial Library; NSU President Dr. Randall J. Webb, Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Dr. Lisa Abney and University Archivist Mary Linn Wernet.

and was recognized at the fourth annual Louisiana Women's Conference hosted by the National Diversity Council. An awards program took place at Dillard University in November.

This award was presented by the National Diversity Council for leadership excellence and for serving as a role model for the promotion of diversity in the workplace. The conference is a statewide event focusing on professional development, community, networking, entrepreneurship and women's health. The 2012 theme was "Finding Health, Wealth and Balance in 2012," through health care, professional development and entrepreneurship and work-life balance. Craig is a partner in the New Orleans office of Adams and Reese where she is a labor and employment attorney.

Morehead State University's **Dr. Edna O. Schack**, professor of education, received the 2012 Mathematics Education Service and Achievement Award (M.E.S.A. Award). The award was presented by the Kentucky Council of Teachers of Mathematics (KCTM) during its fall conference. Awardees are nominated by KCTM members and are chosen by an awards committee. This state-level award is KCTM's highest honor. Award winners are selected for outstanding work in their area of expertise and service to the mathematics community.

In 2011, Dr. Schack was awarded a \$102,907 grant from the National Science Foundation to research the pedagogical content knowledge preparation of preservice elementary teachers in mathematics across Kentucky.

Dr. Schack graduated with an Ed.D. degree from Illinois State University. She received her B.A. and M.S. degrees from Northwestern State University in 1968. She joined the Morehead State faculty in 1987.

Ruth Fruge (2012) joined the staff at the University of Detroit Mercy Athletics Department as ticket sales and fan experience manager. Fruge previously worked as the marketing and ticket operations assistant at Northwestern State, where she assisted in all facets of ticket operations and fan interaction. She also worked as a recruitment student assistant in the Louisiana Scholars' College recruitment office.

U.S. Army **Maj. Treg Ancelet** spent several months as an officer in special events planning for the 57th Presidential Inauguration that took place Jan. 21. Ancelet, a Houma native who earned a degree in music education at Northwestern State University in 1993, has served for three years as commander of The Army Ground Forces Band.

"Anything that goes on outside of the swearing-in ceremony or parade falls under the category of special events – inaugural balls, concerts or prayer services," Ancelet explains. "My job is to look over some troops and make sure we get anything militarily that is needed for these events."

Ancelet's duties included but were not limited to scheduling color guards, honorary bands at each ball and clearances for performers at various venues.

"Everything down to when electric-

ity is plugged in is scheduled and accounted for," Ancelet said. "The littlest hitch can affect the course of the event. Everything is timed down to the wire."

His next assignment is to the Army's heralded "Pershing's Own," the premier musical organization of the U.S. Army since 1922.

Ancelet is a former drum major of the Spirit of Northwestern Demon Marching Band.

Derek Nunn (1999) of Muskogee, Okla., was elected to the Hildale Public Schools' school board in February. Nunn, 38, holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern State. He and his wife Greeva have a daughter and both work for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Taryn Vinet of River Ridge was named the new managing director of St. John Theatre in Reserve earlier this year. Vinet has a bachelor of arts degree in theatre from Northwestern State University and is working towards a master's in arts administration from the University of New Orleans.

Vinet has worked as an actor and a technician throughout the Greater New Orleans area, has done some writing for the stage and is a member of the Big Easy theatre awards nominating committee.

Vinet was hired with St. John in August 2012, after managing SJT's co-production of "The Living Christmas Tree" in December and a handful of other engagements at the theatre.

Nominations open for Hall of Distinguished Educators

Northwestern State University's Gallaspy (Family) College of Education and Human Development Alumni Advisory Board is seeking nominations for the Hall of Distinguished Educators for 2013. Nominees must have graduated from NSU's College of Education at least 30 years prior to nomination. Inductees are annually recognized during Homecoming festivities and honored with a brunch and induction ceremony at the Teacher Education Center.

The deadline to submit nominations is July 12.

Anyone who would like to nominate an outstanding College

of Education alumnus who has had a distinguished career in education should send the nominee's resume and other documentation outlining the reason for the nomination to Gallaspy (Family) College of Education and Human Development, c/o Janet Broadway, Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, LA 71497.

Additional information is available by calling Broadway at (318) 357-6278 or e-mailing broadwayj@nsula.edu.

Scan this to see
the members of the
Hall of Distinguished
Educators



In overcoming adversity, Smith book creates awareness of IPF

Jerry Smith (1961) released his third book earlier this year, "Tragedy, Abandonment and Murder – Led to Happiness." He also reports that he taped three television shows for the ION Media Television Network and that a writer from California is writing a screenplay based on his life as documented in his best-selling book, "Does God Give Us More Than We Can Bear?" Smith is hoping to create awareness of pulmonary fibrosis, a fatal lung disease, and create a Pulmonary Fibrosis Society similar to the American Cancer Society, to advocate research to find a possible cure.

"Every morning I wake up and say, 'It's great to be alive.' After a life of tragedy, abandonment, rejections, the murder of my wife and death of my grandson, I found happiness only to be diagnosed in 2004 at the age of 64, with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis," Smith wrote.

According to the National Institutes of Health, idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF) is a condition in which over a period of time the lung tissue becomes thickened, stiff and scarred. As the lung tissue becomes scarred and thicker, the lungs lose their ability to transfer oxygen into the bloodstream. As a result, the brain and other organs don't receive the oxygen they need.

"I found a doctor in Germany with a laboratory who analyzed my blood and found a fungus that caused my P.F. and made a serum that destroyed the fungus in 2008," he said. "My Dallas doctor told me that my disease was now in remission. Today my lung capacity is at 52 percent. Every day of my life is a struggle to breathe when I over exert and when the weather, temperature and the pollution count changes. I need medicine daily to clear the mucus that builds up from the scar tissue in my lungs, which causes chronic coughing. Often the coughing causes severe breathlessness, which causes severe pain, until I can stop the coughing and restore normal breathing. But I wouldn't change my life today because of the happiness that I experience helping others."

The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation of America claims that there is no known cause, medicine, treatment or cure for the condition and that the expected life span is two to three years from the date of diagnosis.

"It's been nine years since my diagnosis and no one can explain why I am alive and doing fairly well," Smith said. "Statistics show there are currently 200,000 pulmonary fibrosis patients in the United States with approximately 45,000 new patients yearly and about 50,000 patients dying yearly in this country. There are about the same number of people dying from pulmonary fibrosis annually as women dying from breast cancer. And while everybody is aware of breast cancer, almost no one has heard of pulmonary fibrosis and there isn't any funding or practical research being done."

More information about Smith is available at jerrysmith.org. He can be contacted via e-mail at jerry@jerrysmith.org.



Northwestern State University President Dr. Randall J. Webb, left, awarded an Nth Degree to Jacquie Crew, center, and Robert Crew in recognition of their years of service to NSU. Robert Crew has been executive assistant to the president for 16 years after working in the Louisiana Department of Education. Jacquie Crew was a distinguished educator, who volunteered countless hours to assist Northwestern State and Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority. The Nth Degree is one of the university's highest honors and is bestowed for going the extra mile in meritorious service to mankind. It is presented to those whose professional responsibilities and various other roles in making this a better world are carried out to the Nth Degree.



Alumni from Northwestern State University's Beta Omicron Chapter of Pi Kappa Phi presented the last of their 50-year fraternity and sorority certificates from the 1956-1964 alumni group during a reunion luncheon of the founders. Barbara Dean Cameron (1964) was awarded a 50-year certificate as a Delta Zeta Sorority member by her husband George Cameron, Pi Kappa Phi alum (1964). Barbara was also selected as the Rose of Beta Omicron Chapter in 1962.



Romero play has environmental message for youngsters



A play by Northwestern State University and Louisiana Scholars' College alumnus **Greg Romero** has been published by YouthPLAYS.

Romero's work, "Of Plastic Things and Butterfly Wings," is a children's play about a plastic water bottle named Sam that has lost her parents in the Gyres, a swirling ocean landfill twice the size of Texas. With help from a blue crab with a giant claw, a parrot who thinks she is a seagull and The Oldest Sea Turtle That Ever Lived, Sam embarks on a family-friendly, music-filled, epic journey to save us all from the lonely, swirling vortex of thrown-away things and lost hope.

Romero was commissioned to write the play, which is aimed at children in grades K – 5 and addressed the environment and issues of sustainability.

"It is a huge reward to have a play published," said Romero, a 1999 graduate of the Louisiana Scholars' College who was also active in the NSU Theatre. "It shows a publisher believes in you and is willing to invest time, energy and money in you. It allows your work to reach more people and lets your play be experienced on the page or in a production."

Currently based in Philadelphia, Romero's other plays include "The Most Beautiful Lullaby You've Ever Heard" and "The Milky Way Cabaret." His plays have been presented in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Dallas, Austin, Washington, D.C., Louisville and New Orleans. Romero's site-specific projects and participatory live-events include "Material v. Memory," a walking, guided tour through a dozen perishable events staged throughout West Philadelphia, "The Dream Listener," in which individuals met in the library of Plays & Players Theater to tell him their dreams, and "Marco Polo," staged in the bathrooms of Actors Theatre of Louisville during The Humana Festival for New American Plays.

Romero has been a finalist for the Heideman Award, a semi-finalist for the Princess Grace Award, a semi-finalist for the Northpoint Voices Inside Playwriting Residency, nominated for the F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Theater Artist and was selected as the first-ever resident writer of the ArtsEdge Residency, created by The Kelly Writers House and The University of Pennsylvania. He is one of three playwrights to inaugurate the Philadelphia Dramatists Center/Plays & Players Playwriting Residency and is an alumnus of the 2012 WordBRIDGE Playwrights Laboratory.

Romero has been commissioned by The Cardboard Box Collaborative and Little Fish Theater, and is a member of The Dramatists Guild of America. His works have also been published by The Penn Review, The Brighton Post, Heinemann Press and Playscripts, Inc.

During baseball season, Romero works for the Philadelphia Phillies as a "Phanstormer." He juggles at the entrance of Citizens Bank Park, sings "Happy Birthday" to fans in the seats and sometimes shoots t-shirts or hot dogs to fans along with the team mascot, the Phillie Phanatic.

Romero received an MFA in playwriting from The University of Texas-Austin where he held the James A. Michener Fellowship.

According to Romero, the Scholars' College helped him gain a foundation for his career.

"Reading through the Great Books sequence had a major impact on me," said Romero, who earned a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts. "It helped me to expand my mind and learn to think critically. I also benefitted from the deep exchanges that took place with the faculty and fellow students."

Romero credited the Scholars' College faculty with creating a good environment for learning.

"It was so powerful that the professors of the Scholars' College who were incredible intellectuals took me and classmates who were 18, 19 or 20 years old seriously as thinkers," he said. "It was empowering that professors we admired listened to us."

The experience Romero had with the theatre program was also important to him.

"I feel really fortunate to have journeyed through these programs at the same time -- the NSU theatre department and the Scholars' College -- as each journey fed the other through their unique, often complimentary, demands," said Romero. "I will always treasure the work I did at NSU as a performer, as the skills and experiences gained through that has deeply informed my work now as a writer and generally enriched my own life. And it was there that seeds were planted for my own growth into playwriting; namely, I began writing my own audition monologues, and then began writing for others as well."

In his senior year, Romero took a playwriting class under Scott Burrell, now the coordinator of theatre.

"I wrote my first play in that class inspired by a field-trip our class took to the famous American Cemetery," said Romero. "I will always appreciate Scott's openness to and encouragement of the specific questions I was asking at the time, which echoed nicely with the joyfully rigorous spirit I loved so much from the Scholars' College."



More information on Romero is available at gregromero.blogspot.com

**Adding to a lifetime
of accomplishments,
Anne Storms, 87,
completes history
degree**



Anne Storms, left and
Dr. Kathleen Smith, right

Anne Storms' list of achievements got longer last December. The 87-year old resident of DeRidder was among those who received a degree from Northwestern State University during Fall Commencement.

Storms, who earned an Associate of Arts in history, earned her degree at Northwestern State's Leesville/Fort Polk campus.

"I can't believe this is happening," said Storms prior to graduation. "Taking classes has been a wonderful experience for me. I have gotten so much pleasure out of learning and I have found out how much I don't know."

Storms first started college in 1944 at Texas State College for Women, now Texas Women's University. A year later, she left college and married William Gale Storms in 1946. The Storms started a family and she worked at Southwestern Bell Telephone as a switchboard operator. Her husband finished his teaching degree at Southwest Texas State University, now Texas State University-San Marcos.

In the 1950s she became an army wife, living throughout the United States as well as in Asia and Europe. While caring for their two children, Storms worked at various jobs including a stint as an intelligence decoder

in Tokyo. She was also a volunteer with the Girl Scouts and the American Cancer Society.

After her husband retired from the military, Storms worked as a bookkeeper and a licensed real estate broker, serving as president of the Toledo Bend Board of Realtors. She was also active in the Business and Professional Women's Club of Louisiana, which honored her as "Nike" Woman of the Year in 1990 and State President in 1993.

After her husband passed away, Storms decided to back to college.

"After I lost my husband, I felt lost," she said. "I kind of got isolated for a while and going back to college helped me get more active again."

Storms took advantage of a Northwestern State program that allows those 60 or over to take one 3-hour course tuition free.

"I started taking history under Dr. Kathleen Smith and it really started an interest for me," said Storms. "She is such a wonderful teacher, who provides so much information and has a great concern for her students."

Storms said Smith mentored, guided and encouraged her as she not only honed research and writing skills to create papers each semester, but also tackled the challenges computer technology poses. Fellow students were also a help to her.

"I couldn't believe how wonderful the other students were," said Storms. "I didn't know how they would react to me, but they took to me right away and I made some great friends."



Scan to see video of
2012 graduation high-
lights with Anne Storms



Making An Impact

Hearts open and a family grows with children in need of a home

"I think Roland and I have always had a heart to serve others, probably from a young age," said Dr. Amanda Ridley LaComb.

"We are both people people. We love people," added her husband Roland LaComb. "We're both vulnerable and believe in honesty and have at times been taken advantage of, but that hasn't diminished our desire to help others."

Over the years, Amanda, a doctor, and Roland, a coach and teacher, have opened their hearts and home to many children in need and are parents to a blended family of biological and adopted children, while their careers as a physician and an educator enable them to nurture and mentor other youth they encounter.

"It can be difficult. You catch people looking at you," Roland said. "But we look at them as our own. You don't see color, you don't see race."

The LaComb family includes two biological daughters, ages 16 and 13, three sons adopted from China, ages 10, 8 and 3, and two African American siblings, ages 6 and 7. Roland and Amanda have also fostered many children, both temporarily and long-term.

When Roland and Amanda met at Northwestern, they already shared an interest in special needs children. Roland worked one summer at the Louisiana Lions Camp, a summer camp sponsored by the Lions Clubs of Louisiana for children with special needs, diabetes and pulmonary disorders.

"People in my community thought working at Lion's would be a great opportunity for me," he said. "I always wanted to work with and help kids and I learned a lot."

Amanda was planning to work at the Lion's Camp the following summer and a mutual friend suggested they meet to discuss his experience.

Roland, a native of Jennings, has two siblings. Amanda was an only child who grew up in Sherman, Texas. The two married the day after Christmas in 1992. Amanda had just graduated from the Louisiana Scholars' College with a concentration in scientific



The LaComb Family: front row from left, Liam, Tanner, Hezekiah, Chuan and Jamarsha. On the back row are Caitlin, Roland, Maia and Amanda.

inquiry and was about to start medical school while Roland was finishing his last semester at Northwestern State, earning his degree in education in 1993. Amanda is a general practitioner while Roland is a basketball coach and special education teacher. They live in Elton near Jennings.

"We had two girls and our younger daughter was a tough delivery," he said. "We always wanted to have a large family but had never thought of adoption. We started looking into adoption agencies and ended up looking abroad to China, Russia and Guatemala, as well as looking at special needs children."

"I was adopted as an infant," Amanda explained. "There are a lot of initial considerations: types of children available, ages, sex, special needs, etc. plus travel to the country. Do both parents have to travel? Are you assigned a child? Do you pick? Are you matched before or after the commitment is made? Ultimately we decided China's program best fit our needs."

Although girls are more commonly adopted from China, there are millions of boys in Chinese orphanages, most with special needs due to a physical ailment as well as older children who were abandoned. The LaCombs began

paperwork and other requirements for the process of adoption in 2005, just before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck Louisiana.

"After Katrina, we took in a family of 13 from St. Bernard Parish, so we put our home study on a back burner," Amanda said. "Then Rita devastated Lake Charles and our agency, Volunteers of America, was busy helping others. The immigration office in New Orleans was completely closed and everything almost stopped on our processing of immigration paperwork." Steps in the process that normally took a few weeks dragged on for months.

"The China side of paperwork takes another six months, so we were able to finally travel in January 2007 to meet our son on his third birthday," Amanda said.

During the wait, the LaCombs had become foster parents to a 1-year-old, caring for him for six months.

"We were devastated when he left. However, just two months after that, on our daughter's second birthday, OCS placed with us a biological brother and sister, who we have since adopted," she said.

Through 2008 and 2009 the couple continued to foster children, having over 15 different placements both

continued on page 8

short and long term.

"We have fostered as an emergency overnight placement, fostered a newborn addicted to methadone, fostered kids who were identified as being kidnapped from out of state and fostered a young teenage mother with her infant son so she could keep her son because there are no group homes for troubled teens with their own kids. We fostered some kids whose parents got themselves straight and got their children returned and adopted two of our children through our experiences," Amanda said. Not all their experiences were positive. They asked for the removal of one foster child because of his aggressive behavior toward their other children.

Roland and Amanda began to consider adopting an older child from China and were convinced they should adopt two children at once, which was unusual at the time. The couple found a video of a boy with a rare genetic disease and another year-old boy who had a cleft lip and palate and partial blindness. The LaCombs wrote a letter detailing their experiences as parents and foster parents, interviewed through the agency and were approved.

"The day after Thanksgiving 2010, I got on a plane with Roland's aunt to go and get our boys," Amanda said.

People often say to Amanda and Roland "You must be saints," or "you must be great parents."

"I don't think we are saints or great parents," she said. "We love children and see a need that we can help. We are broken and flawed individuals trying to make a difference in our world. Adopting has fulfilled our desires to parent and love others and show God's love every day. You can send money to organizations that help kids or orphans or the elderly or whatever your 'cause' is and there is nothing wrong with that. For us, we needed to share our lives every day and really stretch our hearts."

The LaCombs said there is always an adjustment period for the whole family when someone new arrives.

"There is usually a brief honeymoon, then some lines are drawn and ultimately they accept each other and we grow as a family," Amanda said. "They

all fight like the brothers and sisters that they are. People ask me all the time if they are related and I say, 'They are now.'"

In 2011, Roland and Amanda stopped fostering because it seemed difficult for the newest adopted siblings to cope with the transitions.

"We always talked with them about why the children were staying with us. Sometimes it made sense as a mom who is a doctor and we could take care of a baby who was sick, but we made the decision when our social worker

"It goes back to the way I was raised. I had a strong belief that I wanted to have a family. Being poor, I always wanted to do it the right way. It all starts from that. I had a Jesuit priest who lived across the street from me, who took me under his wing and taught me that I had a choice. That lit a fire under me. No one in my family had ever been to college. You're either going to stay in that rut or fight your way through."

visited for the two Chinese boys' one-year follow up report to send to China," Amanda said. "We could not find our 6-year-old son. I searched the house and found him sitting on his bed crying. He thought someone was going to take him away, so we decided no more social workers with tablets and pencils to take notes."

"We've been through so much," said Roland, whose less than perfect childhood motivates him to be the best parent he can be.

"It goes back to the way I was raised. I had a strong belief that I wanted to have a family. Being poor, I always wanted to do it the right way. It all starts from that. I had a Jesuit priest who lived across the street from me, who took me under his wing and taught me that I had a choice. That lit a fire under me. No one in my family had ever been to college. You're either going to stay in that rut or fight your way through."

Roland was initially interested in psychiatry as a field of study, but realized "that was not the impact I wanted to make." He discovered what he loves

is teaching, coaching and mentoring.

"I relate so well to those kids from poor backgrounds and abusive situations. I love talking to them, getting them going in a different direction, getting out of poverty and being accountable. I always knew that coaching was right for me."

Amanda's career as a physician grants her an avenue to offer comfort to a different set of special needs individuals through her work with geriatric medicine.

"It is like a way of serving," Roland said of Amanda's work. "She works with older people who are dying and there may not be anyone else there to listen. She cares for them so much."

The LaCombs sometimes have to take their work, their family obligations and challenges day by day. That often involves helping some of his children process their previous family experiences and cope with unpleasant realities.

"They say two of the most strenuous careers are doctors and teachers," Roland said.

"We're committed to our careers, to each other and to our family."

Roland said it is not unlikely that the LaCombs will adopt more children in the future.

"A person's childhood experience is so important. I try to make sure I'm doing my best to be the best possible parent I can be. We take care of those kids. That's the center of who we are. It's not perfect. It's something we work at."

"Our hearts have been broken and they have been torn inside out many times over but what good is a 100 percent intact heart at the end if your life?" Amanda asked. "If God gives us good gifts to love and a desire to parent, should we use those gifts? If your heart has never hurt for someone else's pain, I don't think you've really lived. Adopting kids is easy. It's just about loving a child who needs a home and trying your best to be a parent. One of my favorite quotes is 'Adopting a child won't change the world, but you can change the world for one child.' People are always asking us if we would adopt again. My question is why wouldn't we?"

In a single day, the loss of two legends

Friday, Dec. 14 was a joyful day for hundreds of new graduates at Northwestern State University, but for many alumni, it will be remembered more as the day when the university lost two of her most iconic figures, Coach Walter Ledet and Norm Fletcher, whose impacts far eclipsed their roots in athletics at Northwestern.

Ledet, Northwestern State's first All-America football player who became a legendary coaching figure and a high-ranking university administrator along with an influential leader in the Natchitoches community, died suddenly that morning, a robust figure at the age of 93.

Fletcher, renowned for his broadcasting career before he was elected three times as Natchitoches Parish sheriff, died in the afternoon at the age of 82 after battling illness for several weeks.

Both are enshrined in the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, Ledet in 1995 for his athletic and coaching accomplishments at NSU, while Fletcher's broadcasting career earned him the Distinguished Service Award in Sports Journalism in 2010.

"If Natchitoches had a Mount Rushmore, Walter Ledet would be on it," said one local NSU graduate, "and Norm Fletcher might well be."

They were friends and active members of the Walter P. Ledet Coffee Club, a group of retirees, including many former NSU faculty, staff and alumni, which gathers each weekday morning at Merci Beacoup Restaurant. For more than the past decade, they sat next to each other in the Turpin Stadium press box for Demon home football games. Both donated their bodies to medical science.

Ledet, an Abbeville native, was a 1938 Little All-America guard who spurned a contract offer from the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles to remain in Natchitoches and at Northwestern as an assistant coach to Harry Turpin. He married his college sweetheart, Betty Willis of Natchitoches. They celebrated their 71st wedding anniversary July 24 and he was nearing what would have



Coach Walter Ledet (1919-2012)

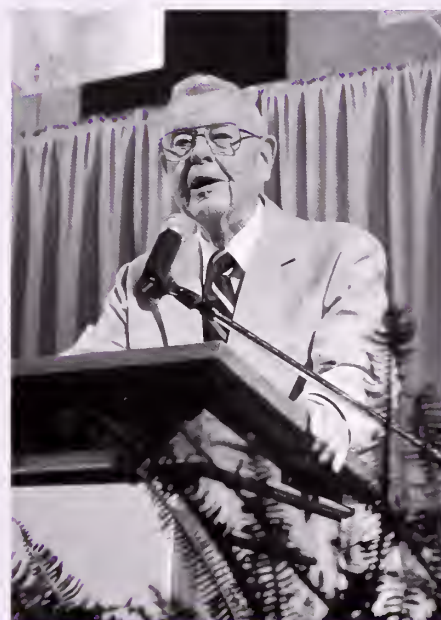
been his 94th birthday Jan. 4.

From 1952-64, while also serving as assistant football coach, he was a highly successful head track and field coach at Northwestern who won five straight Gulf States Conference Championships from 1953-57 and missed a sixth in a row by half a point.

He helped shape the careers of three other Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame competitors at Northwestern, Charlie Tolar, Charlie Hennigan and Pro Football Hall of Fame member Jackie Smith, who came to Northwestern on a track scholarship.

Ledet is in Northwestern's Long Purple Line Alumni Hall of Distinction and the Graduate N Club Hall of Fame for his athletic exploits. The track and field facility at NSU was named in his honor, the Walter P. Ledet Track Complex, in 1996.

Ledet became the university's registrar in 1966 and officially retired in 1980. He was a constant figure at university events and athletic competitions both at home and on the road. He was recently honorary referee of the 2011 Southland Conference Outdoor Track and Field Championships hosted at the Ledet Complex, which is also the site of the annual Louisiana High School Athletic Association Cross



Norm Fletcher (1930-2012)

Country Championships.

An active member of Holy Cross Catholic Church who still helped tend to the church's flower beds, Ledet was the last living founding member of the Kiwanis Club of Natchitoches. The university's Catholic Student Organization recognized him in 2003 for his contributions to the university and its Catholic students.

Fletcher, a Natchitoches native, was elected as sheriff for the first time in 1979, and for several years spoke at the FBI Academy in Washington, D.C. on topics including efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement operations. Fletcher spoke at the National Sheriff's Association Convention in 1981, and was keynote speaker at the Louisiana Sheriff's Association Convention in 1984 and the Louisiana Police Jury Association Convention in 1986.

An Air Force veteran, Fletcher was president of the Natchitoches Parish Chamber of Commerce, state chairman of the Louisiana Cultural Resources Commission in the 1960s, and was the volunteer City/Parish Civil Defense Director for 18 years before running successfully for sheriff.

Fletcher was instrumental in the John Wayne 1958 movie "The Horse Soldiers" being filmed in and around

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Music educator honored for 20 years of dedication

The Texas Music Educators Association recognized Anthony Robinson (1975) for more than 20 years of service to the TMEA annual convention as a percussion clinician and organizer for the Texas All-State Symphony Orchestra.

"Each year different clinicians and guest conductors are brought in to rehearse Texas' finest student musicians and present a concert of very difficult orchestral and band literature at the conclusion of the convention," Robinson said. "My work towards helping prepare the percussionists to play their parts has resulted in me being asked repeatedly by TMEA officials to return and serve in this capacity. It was quite an honor to receive the certificate of recognition because I wasn't expecting it and I did not think anyone had noticed how many years I served as percussion organizer/clinician."

Robinson is currently percussion instructor at East Texas Baptist University and Wiley College of Marshall, Texas; percussion coordinator for the Springhill ISD of Longview, Texas; principal percussion and assistant conductor of the Marshall Symphony and has spent 34 seasons with the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra. He also performs with the Longview, South Arkansas, Texarkana and occasionally the East Texas and Rapides symphonies.

Robinson served 20 years as assistant band director/

percussion coordinator/junior high band director for the Marshall IDS band program under the leadership of Dr. Jerry Payne and succeeded Dr. Payne as director of bands upon his retirement in 2002. He retired from that position in 2007.

Robinson's professional affiliations include Phi Beta Mu, Alpha Chapter, TBA, TMEA, Performing Artist For Yamaha Inc. and The Company of Fifers and Drummers.

Robinson's presentation coincided with the TMEA conference

"This caught me by surprise because the Orchestra Division timed the presentation to conflict with a sectional and I was reluctant to leave the sectional," he said. "I am the only organizer/clinician to have been assigned to work all 5A All-State groups, which include Concert Band, Symphonic Band, Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras."

Robinson's percussion instructors at Northwestern State were the late Dr. John Raush and Don Keipp with post undergraduate studies with the late Edward Kozak of Shreveport.

Legends continued from page 9

Natchitoches. He played the father of the groom in the popular 1989 motion picture "Steel Magnolias," also filmed in and around Natchitoches.

Fletcher served in five decades as the "Voice of the Hall of Fame," lending his baritone delivery as the narrator for ceremonies and videotape. His stirring style ushered each inductee into the elite ranks of Hall of Fame membership, but it is only a part of his remarkable contribution to state sports history.

He was a prominent sportscaster in north Louisiana beginning in the late 1940s and continuing into the 1990s, and still was a contributor until entering the hospital in October. Fletcher was "Voice of the Demons" calling Northwestern State sports events

nearly continuously beginning at the age of 18 in 1949 until running successfully for sheriff, and he reassumed the NSU broadcasting role for two years in the early 1990s.

From 1949-79, he broadcast high school sports, doing every Natchitoches High/Natchitoches Central football and basketball game, except for time spent in the U.S. Air Force. He was Editor-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Radio Service Far East Network in the 1950s as chief news and sports announcer. He broadcast major sports events throughout the Far East, including football, baseball and boxing.

For a quarter-century after he returned home to Natchitoches, he did either prep or college basketball game broadcasts five nights a week from

Scan to see video
of community
reactions to Walter
Ledet's passing.



mid-November until early March, and returned back to the studio early the following mornings to anchor the local news and sports reports and a talk show. Broadcasting sports including football, basketball, baseball, boxing, boat races and even two Gulf States Conference track and field championship meets, his total of play-by-play events was over 4,000 broadcasts. As co-owner of KNOC-AM and KDBH-FM, Fletcher helped launch the broadcast careers of dozens of NSU students, including LSU's Jim Hawthorne and Cox Sports Television's Lyn Rollins.

Mathews takes Spirit of Northwestern director's baton

Jeffrey C. Mathews has been named director of bands at Northwestern State University effective July 1. His appointment is subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors for the University of Louisiana System.

Mathews will replace Bill Brent who has been director of bands since 1983, building the band from one with 48 members to one with approximately 300. Brent will remain as director of the Mrs. H.D. Dear Sr. and Alice E. Dear School of Creative and Performing Arts, focusing on observation of student teachers, student recruitment and fund-raising.

Mathews has been at Northwestern State since 1998 as associate director of bands/associate professor of music, director of student activities and organizations and director of athletic bands/assistant professor of music.

"Becoming director of bands at NSU represents the pinnacle of my 28-year relationship with the band program that began when Mr. Brent recruited me to be a member of the band out of Bossier High School in 1985," said Mathews. "I had the good fortune to be on hand to watch Mr. Brent build the Spirit of Northwestern into what it is today. Mr. Brent and I have worked closely to maintain the size and quality of the SON together for the last 14 years and I look forward to continuing that work moving forward. Fans of the SON can rest assured that they will continue to see great half times shows, great pep band support at basketball games and professional level concerts."

The Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band was a finalist for the 2011 Sudler Trophy, an award to identify and recognize collegiate marching bands of particular excellence that have made outstanding contributions to the American way of life. NSU's band participated in the 2011 New Year's Day Parade and Festival in London. Northwestern State's band was named one of the top eight in the country by the Web site collegeotr.com in 2008.

"After 30 years of serving as the director of bands at Northwestern State, I feel it is time to hand the podium of this incredible organization to the next generation," said Brent. "Jeff Mathews has been a loyal and dedicated colleague and associate for nearly 14 years and I know that he will continue the 100+ year tradition of excellence with the band program at Northwestern. He, along with Associate Director of Bands Kenneth Green and Assistant Director of Bands Steve McKeithen, will work closely with the music faculty and the



Jeffrey C. Mathews

administration to ensure that the Spirit of Northwestern continues to be a focal of pride for the University, our alumni and the Natchitoches community."

Brent said Northwestern's administration has helped the marching band gain national acclaim.

"I want to sincerely thank Dr. Randall Webb and his administration for their support for the past 17 years and Dr. Robert Alost who was my boss prior to Dr. Webb, for his support as well," said Brent. "It has been a wonderful time for me and I feel that the program will continue to thrive under the leadership of Dr. Mathews."

As associate director of bands and an associate professor of music since 2008, Mathews conducts the NSU Wind Ensemble and Symphony Band and serves

as director of summer music classes. He is part of a recruiting team that brings in 85 to 100 new band students annually. Mathews held the Magale Endowed Professorship at Northwestern State in 2008-09.

Mathews serves part-time as Chief of Air National Guard Bands. He is the functional manager of the Air National Guard band program nationwide and principal advisor to the Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs Division and National Guard Bureau Public Affairs on matters pertaining to Air National Guard Bands.

From 2004 to 2008, Mathews was director of student activities and organizations and lead a department in the Division of Student Affairs. He coordinated facility use at Northwestern State and managed day-to-day operations of the Friedman Student Union. Mathews advised the Student Government Association and oversaw the Recognized Student Organization program.

Mathews was director of athletic bands/assistant professor of music from 1998 to 2004, managing and directing all aspects of the Spirit of Northwestern Marching Band.

Mathews earned a Bachelor of Music Education at Northwestern State, a Master of Music Education at the University of North Texas and a Doctor of Musical Arts in conducting pedagogy at the University of Southern Mississippi.

An article by Mathews, "A Descriptive Analysis of Martin Ellerby's 'Paris Sketches,'" was published in the Fall 2011 issue of the Journal of Band Research. He presented a lecture, "Air Force Bands in the 21st Century: A New Mission in the Global War on Terror," at The Martin Institute of Stonehill College, Music and War Conference in 2008.



Les Amies Service Organization created a scholarship to benefit a female student at Northwestern State University who demonstrates leadership and a commitment to service. From left are Les Amies members Dene McCauley, Haley Blount, NSU's associate director of Alumni Affairs; Past President Claire Wardell, Les Amies 1st Vice President Lindsay Maggio, President Jennifer Ingram, NSU Associate Director of Development Jill Bankston, Lauryn Sharplin, Laurie Richard and Erin Dupree, NSU Development program coordinator.

Les Amies Scholarship supports leadership in young women

Les Amies Service Organization of Natchitoches created a scholarship through the Northwestern State University Foundation to benefit an upper-level female student who demonstrates strong leadership and a commitment to community service. The Les Amies of Natchitoches Service and Leadership Award will be granted to a resident of Natchitoches or surrounding parishes.

"We're so excited to be able to assist a young woman in continuing her education, while encouraging all young women to become leaders and set a good example through their service to others," said Haley Blount, Les Amies fund raising member-at-large and NSU's associate director of Alumni Affairs. "While our members are already dedicated to the mission of serving the

Natchitoches community and all those in need, it's important that we encourage others to adopt that same attitude of selflessness and service. Awarding a scholarship to a young female who is already dedicated to serving others and bettering herself through her education is one of the best ways we could think of to give back to our community."

Les Amies is a women's service organization established in Natchitoches in 1958 that encourages service, friendship, hospitality and loyalty. Each member is encouraged to apply the club slogan of "the best through togetherness" and put into action the club motto of "We must learn to do simple things perfectly before we can acquire the skills to do difficult things easily."

More Campus News

NSU's online programs get favorable ranking in national study

Northwestern State University's online degree programs were included in the 2013 edition of Top Online Education Program rankings by U.S. News & World Report.

Northwestern State's online bachelor's programs were ranked 57th and the online graduate program in education was also ranked. This is the second year for U.S. News ranking of online programs and the first year for numeric rankings for degree programs.

The university's online bachelor's programs were ranked 31st in the country in student engagement and assessment and 46th in student service and technology. Northwestern State's graduate programs were ranked 51st in student engagement and accreditation and 75th in student services and technology.

"Northwestern State has sought a leadership role in the delivery of online

education for the past decade. These rankings show the university is committed to providing quality academic programs using the latest technology in course delivery," said Northwestern State President Dr. Randall J. Webb.

The rankings in student services and technology evaluate the way programs allow students to participate in online classes and how faculty assesses classwork.

NSU was the only Louisiana university ranked for its online bachelor's programs. Northwestern State was the only Louisiana university to receive rankings in student engagement and assessment on the bachelor's level and a graduate ranking in student services and technology. NSU was the highest ranked university in the state for student service and technology on the bachelor's level and graduate student engagement and accreditation.

"Northwestern State strives to pro-

vide quality programs and services for students," said Dr. Darlene Williams, vice president for technology, research and economic development. "It's wonderful to receive this type of recognition that can only be attributed to the exceptional faculty and staff who work with our students every day."

Online bachelor's degree programs in education as well as graduate online degree programs in business, education, engineering, nursing and computer information technology were ranked.

The rankings for degree programs are based on criteria including student engagement, faculty credentials and training and student services and technology.

Thirty-two degree programs at Northwestern State are available online.

Information on electronic classes at NSU is available at ensu.nsula.edu.

Ascholarship has been established at the Northwestern State University Foundation in memory of Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's deputy and Northwestern State alumnus Ricky Issac Jr., who died in an on-duty automobile accident Dec. 8, 2012.

The Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office and the NSU Department of Criminal Justice, History and Social Sciences established the scholarship. Donations can be made by mail at the following address: Office of University Advancement, 535 University Parkway, Natchitoches, LA 71497. A notation should be made that the donation is for the Ricky Issac Jr. Scholarship.

The scholarship will be awarded to a criminal justice major with a preference toward a Natchitoches Parish Sheriff's Office deputy or family member.

Issac, who earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, was a member of the Northwestern State football team and was the 2011 Defensive Most Valuable Player.

He lettered in football for four years.

Issac was active in the NSU Huddle of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. He went to work at the NPSO soon after graduation in December 2011, and



Ricky Issac scholarship honors fallen deputy

served as the NSU football team's police escort for the 2012 squad's last two road trips to Central Arkansas and Stephen F. Austin.

For more information, contact the NSU Foundation at (318) 357-4414.



Cruises packages offer avenue for giving to the Alumni Association

The Northwestern State University Alumni Association is offering an opportunity for travelers to experience exotic, historic and breathtaking destinations while contributing financial support to the Association. Two luxury cruises have been planned for 2013 to Alaska and to Europe with ports of call in Italy, Greece and Croatia.

"These trips are a great opportunity for our alumni to network with other Northwestern State alumni and Louisiana natives," said Haley Blount, associate director of Alumni Affairs. "These trips are offered to our alumni and friends at discounted rates because of the partner-

ship we share with other Louisiana universities and the travel companies. It's also the perfect way to be able to give back to the university, because the NSU Alumni Association gets a portion of the proceeds from each booking."

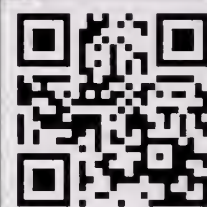
An Alaskan cruise, set for Aug. 5-12 aboard the Oceania Cruises' *Regatta* will depart Seattle and sail to the Alaskan ports of Wrangell, Sitka, Ketchikan and through the stunning, scenic Tracy Arm Fjord and Inside Passage. Early bird specials including two-for-one cruise fares and free airfare are available. For more information to book passage call GoNext at (800) 842-9023.

The Italian Inspirations cruise with ports of call in Italy, Greece and Croatia, Oct. 17-25, will take travelers to centuries' old towns aboard Oceania Cruise's *Riviera*, Oct. 17-25. Travellers will visit Capri, Amalfi and Sicily, the Greek wonderlands of Zakynthos and Corfu and the walled city of Dubrovnik. Early bird specials, including two-for-one cruise fares and free airfare are available. Call GoNext at (800) 842-9023 for more information.

Information is also available at northwesternalumni.com or by calling Blount at (318) 357-4414.



Scan this to see
Jay Thomas press
conference



Jay Thomas begins spring training as head football coach

24th annual Joe Delaney Bowl will be April 20

As Jay Thomas walked to the podium in a packed Stroud Room to be introduced as Northwestern State's new head football coach, he quietly shared a simple message with his new boss.

Shaking hands with veteran NSU director of athletics Greg Burke, Thomas softly but firmly said, "I'm going to work hard and do this thing right, brother."

Thomas has since built his staff, signed over 20 new recruits to join the program for the 2013 season, and begun spring practice, which will culminate Saturday, April 20 with the 24th Annual Joe Delaney Bowl spring game.

After hearing glowing words from Burke and university president Dr. Randy Webb, and listening to Thomas outlining his vision for the Demon program, people in the audience kept using words such as "sincerity," "intensity," "classy," "passionate" and "winner" as they shared their excitement after the hour-long event.

"Coach Thomas is by far one of the best human beings in the business," said 2012 senior All-Southland Confer-

ence kicker John Shaughnessy, the conference football Scholar-Athlete of the Year.

"If there was a way to get four more years of eligibility," said fellow 2012 senior defensive end Wade Williams, "I would come back to play for Coach Thomas. He is that special a coach and a man."

They know first hand. Thomas was the Demons' defensive line coach in 2010 and 2011 before joining longtime friend Daryl Daye as assistant head coach at Missouri Southern last season. They worked together when Daye was head coach at Nicholls State (1993-2003) and as graduate assistants under legendary LSU assistant coach Pete Jenkins in 1988-89 at LSU. Thomas succeeded Daye as head coach at Nicholls (2004-2009), guiding the Colonels to their only Southland Conference championship (2005) and their highest national ranking (13th, 2007) along with a leap from 740 to a solid 930 score on the NCAA's Academic Progress Rate.

After spending six years as the Colonels coach, Thomas said he learned

lessons that he's eager to apply in his new job.

"You always want another opportunity. I've got a vision, I've got a plan, I've got this picture painted in my mind. Now we can get to work making it happen, from day one," he said.

He dispelled one popular misconception about his offensive philosophy. His Nicholls teams employed the triple option running game, ranking among national rushing leaders annually and often confounding FBS and ranked foes, beating Rice in the 2007 season opener, and coming within the final minutes of upsetting the Big Ten Conference's Indiana Hoosiers in another season.

"I know everyone thinks I'm this triple option guru. I'm a defensive guy, by trade, but I do understand offense and what gives defenses fits, and that's where we want to go. We will be creative and innovative. We want to be aggressive. Naturally, we need to be able to run the football, but also, we want to be able to throw the ball," said Thomas.

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This picture has been dubbed **"The Demons' Mount Rushmore Photograph."** From left are Northwestern State's athletic coaching staff from the late 1940s, football assistant James Shultz, football assistant and head track coach Walter Ledet, head basketball coach H. Lee Prather, football assistant and head baseball coach Alvin "Cracker" Brown and head football coach Harry Turpin. NSU's track complex is named for Ledet, the basketball arena is named for Prather, the baseball stadium has Brown's name and football's stadium honors Turpin.

This image was provided by Betty (Mrs. Walter) Ledet, who donated a large collection of black and white photos of Northwestern State/Louisiana Normal sports photos from the 1930s through the 1960s that Coach Ledet had saved, going back to their college years. The Sports Information Office deeply appreciates her kindness and encourages any alumni who have "vintage" photographs from before 1981 to submit them. In 1981, a fire destroyed the Sports Information Office and all of Bullard Hall.

Thomas continued from page 14

"We want to move the chains and control the clock. We want to be in a spread offense, and with the players I believe we can attract here, we can have a lot of fun. I got a text from one of our players at Nicholls, who said, 'Coach, just throw the ball more up there.' We'll do that."

"I'm so excited about what we can do. The tradition of this Northwestern football program is amazing. It has happened here in a big way, and the administrators and so many of the people who are here were here when we've had great success before. I've seen what this community has to offer, and we loved our two years here. We're thrilled to be coming back home to Louisiana, and especially to Natchitoches and Northwestern."

As several current Demons watched, including All-Southland Conference defensive tackle Lesley Deamer, Thomas gave insight into why those players

and others from his days at Nicholls have such great admiration for him and have performed so well for him.

"I respect them, from day one. It's all in how you treat the guys. If you respect them, you'll get respect back. There is a fine line and we all have to work at it together. I'm a father and I treat these guys like my kids. They're all my sons, and that creates a bond," he said.

At the outset of his remarks, Thomas took time to acknowledge people influential in his life, starting with his father, a longtime prep coach at Baker High School, and LSU's Jenkins, along with Daye and the top administrators at Northwestern.

"There's a long list of people I certainly need to thank. At the top of that list is Greg Burke. We're very fortunate to have a man of his caliber and talents. I appreciate his patience as I made this great decision, and I look

forward to working with him to build our program," he said. "As we sat down, we shared the same vision for the Demon football program, which was very critical in our decision to leave a good place and good friends to come back home to Louisiana.

He also shared his pride in the support of his immediate predecessors in the Demon head coaching office, Bradley Dale Peveto (2009-12) and Scott Stoker (2002-08).

"The foundation of the program is here. I'd like to thank Coach Peveto, who has left a good foundation to work from. He was one of the first to call me last night and congratulate me. Also, Coach Stoker called me last night. They both care about this university and poured their hearts and souls into this program, so I'm not walking into a rebuilding situation. Knowing I have their friendship and support means a great deal."

Looking Back

The Normal Fire Brigade

Motto: Safety First.

On Nov. 4, 1920, a meeting of the boys of the shack was held to organize a fire brigade. A week later the brigade had its first drill. The purpose of organization was to safeguard the lives and protect the property of the Louisiana State Normal School. The brigade consisted of a chief, a lieutenant, 16 privates and a mascot. Membership in the brigade was considered a distinction and its members were subject to military discipline.

On Saturday mornings once a month, the brigade drilled and instructed for two hours. The drills were designed to afford the members special knowledge and practice in handling the fire apparatus and appliances and in reaching the point of fire with the least confusion and best results. The drills were thorough and as closely as possible approximated actual fire conditions.

Members were W. Hansler, chief; P.S. Chambers, captain; S.A. Moncla, lieutenant, and V.L. Roy Jr., mascot. Privates were Calvin Bordelon, Charles E. Elkins, J.F. Gauthier, Adolphe Laborde, C.E. LaPrairie, W.A. Lawrence, G.W. McGinty, C.E. Manning, A.B. Millican, W.W. Norris, Hezzie Sylvest, F.W. Smith, Alphonse Wallet, C.A. Wise, J.A. Young and Wiltz Gremillion.



Guess Who



Three senior members of the NSU baseball team were picked in the 2002 Major League Baseball draft. Can you name them? The first five readers to call the Alumni Center at (318) 357-4414 will win a prize.

Answers to Winter 2012 Guess Who were University President Joseph Orze and Student Government Association President Tod Klotzbach.

Winners from the Winter 2012 issue were:
James Martin, Jr. of Pearl, Mass. (1985)
Susan Hall of Deville, La. (2001)

In Memory

1934 – Joeline Bakat Robinson, Dec. 5, 2012, Lake Charles

1934 – Marvin Tanner, Sept. 13, 2012, Evergreen

1939 – Walter P. Ledet, Dec. 14, 2012, Natchitoches

1943 – Mary Jean Swift Thomas, Jan. 30, 2013, Natchitoches

1945 – Colleen Woods Baker, Dec. 1, 2012, Houston

1949 – John G. "Red" Robertson Jr., Feb. 6, 2013, Ferriday

1949 – Bernard Waggoner, Feb. 5, 2013, Logansport

1950 – Grady F. Howell, Oct. 19, 2012, Denver, Colo.

1950 – Retta Strickland Poole, Jan. 8, 2013, Shreveport

1951 – Patricia Christine Prince, Jan. 31, 2013, Coushatta

1954 – Dorothy Carnahan Benefield, Jan. 12, 2013, Natchitoches

1956 – Howard Dean Clark Jr., Jan. 3, 2013, Shreveport

1957 – Orville Wayne Rigdon, Jan. 28, 2012, Houston, Texas

1960 – William "Bill" Proctor O'Bannon Jr., Sept. 13, 2012, Natchitoches

1960 – John Milton Nix, March 25, 2012, Bossier City

1960 – Margaret Reynolds Steward, Dec. 28, 2012, Baton Rouge

1965, 1972 – Yvonne Stephens Tuminello, Jan. 14, 2013, Alexandria

1972 – James "Jim" Pierson, Dec. 8, 2012, Natchitoches

1975 – Gary Earl Hall, April 12, 2012, Longview, Texas

1986 – Richard Turner Johnson Jr., Nov. 27, 2012, Natchitoches

2010 – Jonathan Douglas Hammons, Jan. 29, 2013, Shreveport

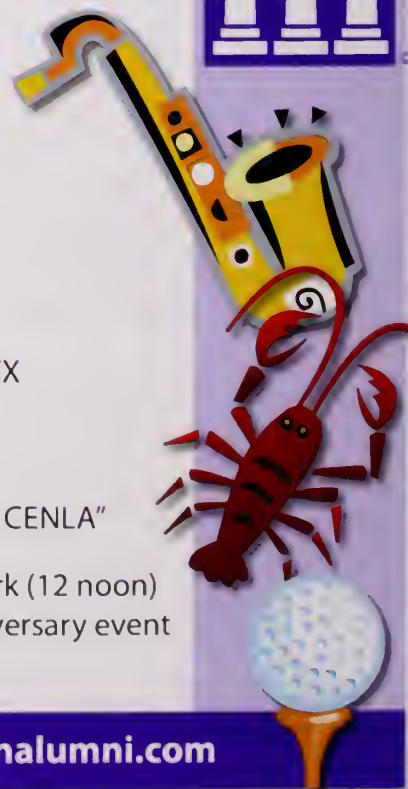
2011 – Ricky Isaac Jr., Dec. 8, 2012, Natchitoches

Billy Mack Dearing, Oct. 17, 2012, Mooringsport

Norm Fletcher, Dec. 14, 2012, Natchitoches

NSU Alumni After Hours Tour

March 14 (Thursday)	Lafayette @ Blue Dog Cafe (6 p.m.)
March 21 (Thursday)	New Orleans @ ACME Oyster House (6 p.m.)
March 22 (Friday)	Baton Rouge @ Ralph & Kacoo's (6 p.m.)
April 6 (Saturday)	Houston @ Ragin Cajun Restaurant (12 noon)
April 13 (Saturday)	Natchitoches @ Natchitoches Jazz/R&B Festival NSU Alumni Association tent (6 p.m.)
April 18 (Thursday)	Shreveport @ Savoie's (6 p.m.)
April 19 (Friday)	Dallas Area @ Ridgecrest Country Club, Plano, TX Golf outing (2 p.m.) & Crawfish Boil (6 p.m.)
May 2 (Thursday)	Alexandria @ Tunk's Oyster Bar (6 p.m.) Featuring Dr. Harry Briggs 2-mile "Swim for CENLA"
June 1 (Saturday)	Washington D.C. Crawfish Boil @ Fort Hunt Park (12 noon) Louisiana College Coalition (LCC) 10 th anniversary event



Registration & detailed information available at northwesternalumni.com